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## Chapter 9

### OUTREACH AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Improving the status of wild salmonid resources will require that government entities, citizens, and stakeholders have a basic understanding of the background and tools necessary for protection and restoration. For steelhead as well as other species of concern in the Lower Columbia Steelhead Conservation Initiative (LCSCI) area, success will depend on creating ownership and partnerships at various levels. Participants in the LCSCI recognize the important role that outreach and education play in the effort to successfully complete our goal of restoring habitat for wild steelhead and salmon stocks. Involving and educating the public in salmon restoration and natural resource issues is critical to our success. Government alone, cannot conserve and restore salmon across the region. The LCSCI acknowledges that actions must be worked out by communities and landowners, with local knowledge of problems and ownership in the solutions. Watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, volunteer habitat restoration groups and other grassroots efforts are all tools for getting the work done.

Local and state government programs will provide regulatory and technical support to these efforts, but the bulk of the work to conserve and restore habitat will be done by local people. Education is a fundamental part of this community based action. People must understand the needs of steelhead/salmon in order to make informed decisions about changes necessary to restore and maintain healthy watersheds and healthy wild fish populations.

LCSCI outreach efforts are focused on involving other local governments and partnering with them to support community based actions, provide education for protection and restoration efforts, and serve as network to share information and ideas. The number of citizens who come forward to volunteer their time to help implement the plan and build stewardship for the future will determine the value of outreach and education to the restoration efforts.

Restoration efforts are a part of a long-term commitment and outreach and education activities will continue long after the LCSCI is submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Services. In addition, the outreach concepts and strategies used in the LCSCI are consistent with those that will be developed and applied in other areas of the state under the broader salmon strategy.

This section will describe LCSCI outreach efforts. Efforts were initially developed and implemented by an Outreach Team; that team has now expanded into a larger and more diversified Education/Outreach Steering Committee.

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## Outreach and Education Coordination

Initially, the LCSCI utilized an Outreach Team that involved several state agencies (e.g., Conservation Commission, Agriculture, Ecology, Fish and Wildlife) that combined their resources with those of local government to develop, promote, and implement the education and outreach effort. The members of the Outreach Team changed and expanded to include a variety of interests, knowledge and skills, and continued to evolve as work on the LCSCI progressed. The Team met on a weekly basis to work on identification of local partners, audiences and resources associated with education and outreach. It continued to develop and distribute information, and support community meetings to provide information on steelhead and salmon restoration. The team coordinated with and maintained a relationship with Oregon's salmon and steelhead restoration efforts, especially since the two states share the Lower Columbia steelhead ESU.

The Team, working with its local partners, established a new Education/Outreach Steering Committee in January, 1998. The Steering Committee is currently comprised of members of the conservation community, local, state and federal government, business and environmental education community, and Co-op Extension and will soon be expanded to include other regional interests. The role of the Committee is to develop and implement the region wide public education and outreach effort. The mission of the group is to mobilize citizens and involve them in the process of recovery. It's responsibilities include:

- Providing support to local governments and other groups in their efforts to restore salmon
- Identifying key members of local communities who will be willing to help implement the education/outreach effort
- Identifying key members of various stakeholders groups who will be willing to work in support of salmon restoration
- Developing tools/materials to be used locally

In addition, the regional Steering Committee will coordinate its approach with the Governor's Office and the Salmon Team, the legislature, local governments and tribes directly as well as through their Regional Steelhead Management Board and other key interests. It will focus on working with and through local watershed councils, stewardship and restoration groups and other local community organizations to design and implement this education and outreach effort. When needed the Committee will work with the local community and/or watershed to organize a local group to assist in carrying out the education/outreach effort.

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The outcomes identified by the Committee include:

- **An informed public that understands**
  - ⇒ the seriousness of the condition of the steelhead and salmon
  - ⇒ the consequences, both economic and personal, of having ESA listed salmon in their watersheds
- **A mobilized public that is**
  - ⇒ willing to work in support of salmon restoration
  - ⇒ willing to contribute resources towards salmon restoration
  - ⇒ willing to change current practices and behaviors to support restoration

The Steering Committee meets twice monthly and is developing a detailed action plan. In the interim, work is continuing on previously identified objectives that include:

1. The formation of a WSU Cooperative Extension Master Watershed Stewards program in the region
2. Periodic meetings with the regional Conservation Districts, National Resource Conservation Service and Co-op Extension to implement education and restoration plans
3. Periodic meetings with county and city governments to review and revise plan actions as needed and provide on-going information on plan efforts
4. Steering Committee member presentations and informational meetings with local groups and citizens regarding the LCSCI
5. Support and coordination with the Governor's Office on the statewide education/outreach efforts
6. Support and coordination with US Fish and Wildlife Service in organizing the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ESA
7. Development of education materials and tools
8. Identification and contact with current watershed or restoration groups to invite their participation in the education/outreach effort

The Steering Committee will continue to provide local citizens and groups the opportunity to understand and actively contribute to and comment on the LCSCI as it develops and assist with plan implementation and monitoring.

### **Chronology of Community Based Outreach Actions**

Beginning in the fall of 1996, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) held local scoping meetings with the public and key stakeholders in the Lower Columbia River area to outline ideas and to obtain feedback on actions related to steelhead conservation and restoration needs. The emphasis of these meetings was on fishery management concerns related to harvest and hatchery strategies. These meetings were followed by WDFW public meetings to discuss the development and review of the Wild Salmonid Policy (WSP) under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The WSP will serve as one of the cornerstones for harvest and hatchery management in the LCSCI.

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The Outreach Team worked to build on WDFW's efforts by working in partnership with the five county governments in the LCSCI area. A day-long forum (Forum) sponsored by Cowlitz, Clark, Lewis, Skamania, and Wahkiakum counties was held in October, 1997 to discuss and identify actions that could be undertaken to restore steelhead and salmon runs. The Forum focused on providing participants with a better understanding of:

- The range of possibilities for achieving habitat restoration,
- Their role in working with federal, state, and local governments,
- What's already underway, and
- Clarification and agreement on actions and activities needed to achieve habitat restoration.

Over 130 people attended the Forum from a variety of interests including business, industry, sports fisherman, utilities, ports, local economic development councils, cities, tribal members, and salmon restoration groups, and government agencies. Participants identified problems that were both substantive habitat issues such as culverts as well as process issues such as permitting.

Groups recommended that agencies and local governments focus more on education and extension services rather than looking for more regulatory approaches for improving salmon habitat. They identified increased technical support and resources for local landowners as a priority. They believed that better cooperation is needed among and between agencies and organizations and that technical assistance needs to be provided in "customer friendly packages."

Partnerships and voluntary citizen efforts need to be supported and enhanced through outreach, education, technical assistance, and resources.

Many participants indicated an interest in the concept and formation of watershed councils to deal with the problems on a more global, basin-wide and long-term basis. Local watershed councils and action teams currently exist in the region or are being planned. These councils can serve as the focal point for decision making and local involvement in habitat protection and restoration. Watershed councils currently operating in the region and throughout the state have brought together diverse interests within a watershed, including timber, agriculture, mining, conservation, recreation and business interests with representatives from all levels of government. These partnerships are working toward a common goal of restoring watershed health and the species dependent on healthy watersheds.

The county sponsors of the Forum agreed to continue to work together to design an ongoing communication process to sustain involvement and participation in conservation planning and implementation strategies. There was a strong commitment to work with and

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through local citizens to make things happen and provide a variety of ways to continue citizen participation.

As part of the commitment made at the Forum, five community meetings were held in December, 1997 in each of the five counties. These meetings were well attended and provided an opportunity for both state and local government to share with the public what short and long term actions have been identified to date in the LCSCI, how they have been prioritized, gaps that need to be addressed, and long term commitments that need additional funding or other actions before they can be implemented.

The Outreach Team, in conjunction with the local governments, also provided information to the public on how and where they can get involved in a variety of planning and restoration activities. The Team, working with other groups, developed a basic “tool kit” of information and key contacts that can be distributed to the public in various settings. Outreach and education activities or products that have been developed in support of the LCSCI are meetings, workshops, fair booths, restoration guides, leaflets, media advisories, and an internet web page (<http://www.wa.gov/esa>).

The Outreach Team expanded its efforts through more direct involvement with Conservation Districts, cities, ports, and utilities. Informal meetings and discussions were held with these and other key groups throughout the LCSCI area. These discussions centered around the impact of potential Endangered Species Act (ESA) listings on the regional interests, identified what various organizations were doing to protect and enhance habitat, identified problems and obstacles to overcome and opportunities for more effective partnerships in the future.

The Conservation Districts play a key role in habitat restoration. The Districts held their first regional ESA/LCSCI coordination meeting in early November, 1997 and again in February, 1998 to continue to work together to share ideas, tools and resources to improve fish habitat.

The Outreach Team also included participation from the Lower Columbia National Estuary Program and the Governor’s Council on Environmental Education. Both of these groups offer significant opportunities for reaching a variety of audiences and providing some well-developed information and education tools on environmental restoration and protection.

### **Education/Outreach Monitoring**

In all aspects of the LCSCI it will be necessary to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of strategies and actions (see chapters 10 and 16). This is also the case for outreach efforts. The value of education and outreach to protection and restoration efforts cannot be measured simply by collection and analysis of monitoring data; it must be measured by the number and quality of efforts from citizens who come forward to

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volunteer their time to help implement the conservation plan and be stewards of their watersheds into the future.

The following are measures identified by the Steering Committee that can be used to determine the effectiveness of outreach and education efforts for the LCSCI:

- ❑ Number of Co-op Extension Master Watershed Steward programs implemented in the region
- ❑ Number of adults educated and certified as Master Watershed Stewards
- ❑ Number of individuals/groups assisted by Master Watershed Stewards
- ❑ Number of volunteers assisting locally to implement the strategy
- ❑ Number of local “steering committees” organized to assist w/implementation
- ❑ Increase in the amount and type of resources contributed to support activities
- ❑ Number of citizens attending information/education presentations
- ❑ Increase in adult volunteers for local public and private restoration – stream team efforts
- ❑ Increase in students and schools involved in prevention/restoration efforts
- ❑ Number of supportive articles/stories occurring in local newsletters/bulletins
- ❑ Number of media articles/stories supporting salmon restoration
- ❑ Support by citizens for local funding is identified and/or increased for prevention and restoration activities
- ❑ Support by citizens of local land use practices, ordinances, and change to reflect prevention and protective measures for habitat

Further development of education and outreach strategy monitoring for the LCSCI is planned. Results from that work will be included in subsequent LCSCI documents.